NUMB. XIII.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

——— Trahit sua quemque Voluptas:
Dic mihi, si fueras tu Leo, qualis eris? MART.

MONDAY, MAY 4. 1724.

THERE are in every Man's Life; even the wiſeſt, and moſt fortified; certain *Periods* of *Weakneſs*, which demonſtrate our common Frailty, and ſeem thrown into our Nature, as Preſervatives againſt *Pride*; and for the Mortification of Human Vanity.

THAT Venerable *Sage* of old, who has left us this *Aphoriſm*, *That no Man ſhould be eſteem'd happy, 'till after his Death*; might have extended his Obſervation, as well to our *Conduct*, as our *Fortune*: *Let no Man, during Life, be call'd Reſolute, or Prudent.*

COULD I ever have Thought, That after paſſing my giddy *Youth* in a ſteddy Contempt of Beauty, I ſhould be enſlav'd to it, *againſt Judgment*, in my Grand *Climacterick!* If the Duty of a PLAIN-DEALER did not indiſpenſibly oblige me to the moſt rigid Impartiality; even to the giving Sentence againſt *My-ſelf*, with what Face cou'd I confeſs, (what I am aſham'd, when I but think of) That I, who am a *ſtaid Old Batchelor*, am afraid, I am falling in *Love* with *Patty Amble* the *Coquett*! who always ſeem'd to me, to have been *born* in a Fit of *Laughter*! and never had a *Thought* of *Gravity*, but when it furniſh'd her with an Occaſion to divert herſelf at the Expence of it!

WELL! If this ſhould, in good Earneſt come to come to paſs, I ſhall have a moſt uncomfortable Time of it! What Reaſon I have had, and from what Time, to ſuſpect it, I ſhall without Reſerve, communicate, in the Progreſs of my PAPERS. But let it prove what it will, the Occaſion of this Preamble is from an unuſual Diſorder, in which I am come Home this Evening, after a kind of frolickſome Adventure, with that young *Romp*; which has left me under an Impreſſion, little better than *Witchcraft*; tho' at any Time before *laſt Eaſter*, I ſhould have thought it *not worth telling*,

TO Day, when ſhe *hoyden'd* into the Aſſembly, the whole Company roſe together, and received her with that Pleaſure, which her *Gayety* diffuſes every where. She ſailed through us all, with a *Swimming*, *Smiling Port*, that was viſibly *affected*, but irreſiſtably engaging! ——When ſhe had flutter'd, and fidgeted, and ſloped her ſelf forward, and wheel'd down her Hoop, to the wideſt Swell of it's *Convex*, in a Circular Courſe of *Curteſies*; ſhe trip'd Side-ways to her Seat; and I was juſt beginning to hope *Calm Weather*, after ſuch a *Whirl-Wind* of *Ceremony*! when ſhe roſe, as it were in a *Start*, with a look moſt *Whimſically Serious*; and drawing a Paper from her Boſom, pac'd demurely to my *Chair*.—— She carry'd her Head to the left ſide ſoftly ſweeping her right Eye-Brow, with the *Knob* of her *Fan*, and ſinking forward, when ſhe came near me, with a Fantaſtical Air of Languiſhment, bruſh'd my Mouth with her Paper; and began to play over her Tricks, in a long and myſtical *Jargon* of *moſt Womaniſh Impertinence*.

' ANDWere they, ſaid ſhe, ſo naughty, to leave it by
' it's nown ſelf? And did no body help it to write it's
' PLAIN-DEALERS? and was it abus'd, and over-
' work'd and neglected? Well then, let it be but Good,
' and mind it's Book, and waſh it's Face, and forget
' to be croſs, and comb it's Head, and throw away
' it's dirty Stick; and ſee what I intend to do for it!
' There take it, and Print it; And, don't care a Pin
' for the Work they have put upon it. For I love it,
' and will think for it; and bring it good Things. And
' if it wou'd'nt look Grim, I ſhould buſs it, and ſtroak
' it, and chuck it under the Chin; and make much
' of it, and play with it, and'——*&c.*

AFTER this ſilly Rate, ſhe ran on, with a ridiculous, but lively and never-ending Volubility: and perceiving, that the Company laugh'd out, and were diverted at the groteſque Figure I was making under her Hands, at length ſhe kiſs'd me outright, and ſet 'em all, in an *Uproar*. I wou'd fain have look'd peeviſh. I turn'd my Face from her, and cry'd; *Piſh*—— and *Pſhaw* —— and *Fiddle*, —— and ſhook my Head in a great Heat, and winch'd in both ſhoulders; and much Pains I took, to ſeem nettled, and uneaſy. But, to confeſs a fooliſh Truth, it was all, but *mere Show*; for I was never ſo agreeably made an Aſs of in my Life, and while I felt the buſy Wanderings of her Fingers about my Face, I was ſtung I can't tell how, with a Kind of a tingling Delight, all over me; which being deſirous to prolong, I pretended to make Efforts for puſhing her away; and under that Pretence, gave my Hands the Opportunity of *touching* her, here, and there,——And I muſt own, I was ſorry when ſhe put an End to her *Gambols*.

BUT As ſoon as I came Home and look'd into her Paper, I was not ſo much an *Aſs*, (far gone as I found My-ſelf) but that I preſently diſcern'd her *Drift*: And I wiſh, with all my Heart, that I had Courage enough to return it her; and tell her, in downright Terms, *I don't think it worth Printing*. But whatever the Cauſe of this ſtrange Alteration may be, there is nothing ſo dreadful to me, as the Danger of diſobliging this *She-Cockatrice*! Since therefore, I am in this odd Manner, *bewitch'd*, e'en take it, in the *arch Flirt's* own Words: For it is no Work of mine; and I will have nothing to do with it.

[Price Two Pence.]

The

The LADIES *Equivalent.*

A TALE, *with a* MORAL *to It.*

IN The Reign of the Emperor *Juſtinian*, the City of *Conſtantinople* was much throng'd with *Foreigners*; for whoſe Entertainment, *unuſual Paſtimes* were invented. The Publick Theatres were embelliſh'd, interlarded and embroider'd, with *Muſick*, *Magick* and *Tumbling*; and ſuch *unſpeakable* Additions, as were fitteſt to give Pleaſure to the *Eyes* of *Goths*, *Vandals*, and *Saracens*, to whom *Plays*, *alone*, were inſipid, becauſe acted in a Language, which they were in a Manner, wholly Strangers to.

THEODORA, the Empreſs, had been formerly a *Comedian*, and was a liberal Promoter of whatever cou'd contribute to make Pleaſure Pompous. Among the Numbers, who found their Intereſt in this *Byaſs* of the *Court*, there was a wily and egregious *African*; whom for the Flatneſs of his Noſe, the Tawnineſs of his Complexion, and a certain *Majeſtical Brutallity*, in the Compoſition of his Features, the merry *Greeks* had nicknamed the *LYON*. This Man became rich, by the univerſal Encouragement, that was given to an odd Project, of his ſtarting.——It was a Kind of *Blind-Buzzard*, or *Midnight-Mummery*; of which it is difficult, at this great Diſtance of Time, to conceive a clear Notion: But Perſons of the higheſt Rank, of both Sexes met there, diſguis'd, and under borrow'd Reſemblances, danc'd, regal'd, and diſcours'd with each other, at large, and diſengag'd from all *Ceremoney Diſtinction* or *Punctilio*.

IT Was generally allow'd, however, by all but the *LYON*'s Enemies, that nothing paſs'd in theſe Meetings, either Scandalous or Misbecoming, Every thing was Magnificent, Ornamental, and Enlivening: But no *Privacies* were permitted, nor no *Indecencies* conniv'd at.

IT Fell out, notwithſtanding, moſt unfortunately for the *LYON*, That *Religion* was at this Time very flaming, and watchful. The *Good Fathers* of the Church became ſcandalized, and alarm'd, at the Probability of *Impurities*, in this new-invented *Nightwork*: For, it was dangerous, they knew, to allow ſuch Latitude to their *Female Flock*, while their Shepherds were at Reſt, who kept the *Wolf* from *biting* them. They determine, therefore, vigorouſly to *remonſtrate* againſt it. But there was One conſiderable *Rub*, that lay full in their Way. The *Emperor himſelf* was often preſent at theſe Meetings, and indulg'd them, as an Innocent, and agreeable Recreation.

TO Remove this heavy *Difficulty*, the *Good Fathers*, with great *Dexterity*, charg'd the Motive of their *Fears*, upon the *Weakneſs* of the *Women*, whoſe Natures, they ſaid, were liable to very dangerous *Impreſſions*, from thoſe Whiſperings and Squeezings, and Inflamations of their *Vanity*. They went on to aſſert, That a *Woman's* Defence againſt *Man*, lying rather in her Dread of *Shame*, than her Abhorrence of *Iniquity*, ſhe ſhou'd never be thought *Safe*, while under the Hazard of *Temptations*. The *Men* indeed, *they believ'd*, might be *ſtrong* enough to *reſiſt*; but not their *Wives*, and their *Daughters*: Weak Veſſels! and brittle! and which wou'd *break* with a *Fall!* It were Prudence, therefore, to place them out of the *publick Reach*, and *Cupboard* them up, for the Houſhold Uſe of their *Owners*: So they humbly repreſented, That it wou'd be an Act of great *Piety* and *Edification*, if his Imperial Majeſty gave Command for the Total *Suppreſſion* of theſe New *Nurſeries* of *Debauchery*.

IT Is one Thing to be *Pious*, and another to be *Wiſe*. The Warmth of their *Zeal* had not ſuffer'd them to conſider, That there were *Women* of *Wit*, and *Spirit*, who would vindicate their *Sex's Honour*; and make uſe of their powerful *Influence*, to oppoſe the good *End* of theſe Reverend Memorialiſts, were it for no other *Reaſon*, but becauſe the *Means* were unmannerly. *THEODORA*, the Empreſs, was provok'd to the laſt Degree; and after reproaching their *Partiality*, and the mean and falſe *Idea's*, which they had conceiv'd, of *Women's Vertue*, fell to reaſon with them in this Manner.

'HOW Contemptibly wou'd your *Sex* compel us 'to conſider them, if all *Men* were to treat us with 'ſo ungenerous a *Diffidence!* Is it poſſible, think ye, 'That our *Perſons* can be won, before our *Hearts* 'have diſpos'd of 'em? And, whenever we *Love* '*paſſionately*, we have Courage to *Act reſolutely*; and '*make* Opportunities, if we were not allow'd to *find* 'em. If you once confine our *Bodies*, you ſet our '*Minds* at full Liberty. Our *Natures* are too gene'rous, to *deceive* thoſe who *truſt* us. But we think it 'a *Merit*, to make *Fools* of the *Faithleſs*.'

THE *LYON*, grinning horribly, behind the Empreſs's Chair, was ready to *roar*, with Delight, at this Rebuke to the Fathers. But, ſtedfaſt, and immoveable, in the *Piety* of their *Purpoſe*, they were about to Reply at Large: When the Emperor, who had *Meanings* not to be trac'd on his *Countenance*, concealing his Reſentment, return'd this *Anſwer* to their *Remonſtrance*.

'I Thank you, for this *Religious Simplicity*, of you 'Proceeding. You are the *Eyes* of our *Conſcience* 'and *ſee farther* than we can. But I am not more 'pleas'd with your applying for *Redreſs* of this *formi'dable Grievance*, than ſurpriz'd, at your *overlooking* 'another, of like Tendency; and which your *laudable Zeal*, for *Removing Temptations*, muſt excite you, 'to thank me, for reſolving to ſee remedy'd.

'THE *Women* have a *Cuſtom*, when they ſtand in 'need of *Abſolution*, to *ſend for* their Confeſſor, and 'open their Hearts to him, in their *Cloſets*. Were all 'your Reverend *Order* of equal *Sanctity* with *you*, this 'cou'd poſſibly adminiſter no juſt Cauſe of *Scandal*: 'But, ſince *Nature* is *deprav'd*, and there have been '*Wolves*, *in Sheep's Cloathing*, I conceive it a Deſign, 'of *much Edification*, to aboliſh, for the future, this '*Indulgence* of the *Women*; and withhold their *Abſolution*, 'till they come for it, to the *Churches*. Intend'ing therefore to join theſe *good Purpoſes* in *One*, I com'mit it to your Care, to prepare an *Edict*, for *Both*, 'that I may decree it into *Law*, with as much ſpeed, 'as poſſible.'

THE *Good Fathers* were, ſo unexpectedly, and beyond Meaſure, *confounded*, at this over-liberal *Extent* of the Emperor's *pious Purpoſe*, that they ſtood long, at a Loſs, to find fit Words to thank him. But they did it at laſt, with this *Hope*, in the *Rear* of *all*; —— That his High and Imperial Majeſty *wou'd not haſten them too much, in Two Decrees of ſuch Importance, ſince the Empreſs had urg'd ſome Arguments, to prove one of them needleſs; and who cou'd tell, when they came to examine Things more cloſely, but they might be miſtaken, in both of 'em?*

THUS, I have given you, the *Coquet's Story*; and am well enough aware what the *Gypſie's* Head was running on: But, if any Body ſhou'd deſire to be made as wiſe as I am, I ſhall tell 'em an *old Story* and let 'em take it, in Satisfaction.— 'A Philoſopher 'bought ſome Meat, and returning from the Market, 'hid it under his Cloak. An Impertinent Fellow met 'him, and would needs know *What it was?* —— It 'is *there*, ſaid the Philoſopher, on purpoſe, That you '*ſhou'd not know it*.

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